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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT PASS TO USAID

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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN EARTHQUAKE RESPONSE: WHERE WE ARE AND
WHERE WE'RE GOING

1. (U) Summary. As we approach the one-month anniversary of the earthquake, post offers this overview of relief efforts to date and an assessment of key priorities for the future. The earthquake itself caused much more damage and loss of life than initially estimated, but the Pakistani and international response has generally been strong -- with the United States leading in most categories of assistance. The humanitarian relief phase of the assistance effort began with clearing operations and the delivery of search and rescue teams, medical aid, food and shelter. This phase is continuing with a heavy focus on preparation for harsh winter conditions and it will last at least until winter begins to subside at the end of March. (We expect the November 19 donors conference will set the agenda for the reconstruction phase of the donor response.) In the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, the U.S. and international donors have focused on airlifting urgently needed supplies and equipment into the theater and onward by helicopter into the affected areas. The need for air shipments into Pakistan will continue as we prepare for the onset of winter, but the need will diminish over time as NGOs and international organizations find more sustainable sources locally and in the region. The need for helicopter lift into quake-hit regions will continue at least through the winter. End Summary.

Earthquake Response to Date

2. (U) As more reliable numbers begin to emerge, the full impact of the 7.6 magnitude earthquake and the level of international response are becoming clear. The GOP is now reporting 73,000 dead and 69,000 injured. Press reports suggest that in some areas men are virtually the only survivors, as women and children were predominantly in homes or schools that collapsed. An estimated 2.8 million Pakistanis require shelter assistance. The humanitarian response to the earthquake is a work in progress, but has for the most part been timely and effective. The Pakistani military response has been especially impressive, and the GOP response structures have begun to coalesce. Personnel on the ground are learning fast.

3. (U) The United States has been quick to respond and has played a very significant and visible role in earthquake recovery. Six Navy ships have delivered 115 pieces of heavy equipment and 158 tons of humanitarian relief supplies from US, Egyptian, and Gulf State donations. The USAF has run well over a hundred airlifts into Pakistan. The US Army, Navy, and NAS have flown over 1,500 helicopter sorties into the north delivering more than 4.3 million pounds of goods. Thirty one U.S., and US funded, helicopters are flying relief missions. Of the roughly 8,900 tons of relief supplies received by Pakistan by November 3, the U.S. accounts for some 4,100 tons (46 percent), dwarfing any other single donor. US helicopters have delivered over 2,100 tons of relief supplies; the closest runner up among donors is the UK, with 182 tons (8 percent of the US total). Even Pakistan (at 496 tons) has delivered less than a quarter of the U.S. total.

4. (U) USAID has committed \$41.8 million, with the focus on shelter, water and sanitation and other relief supplies. Military humanitarian assistance is at least \$60 million thus far. DoD has 933 deployed personnel to provide relief and reconstruction assistance and has established a Mobile Army Surgical Hospital (MASH) in Muzaffarabad. To date, almost 600 patients have been served, including 46 surgeries. By 7 November a U.S. Marine field hospital will be open in Mansehra. The Embassy has established and staffed Forward Operating Bases in Muzaffarabad and Mansehra to help coordinate USG aid and assist Pakistani Authorities.

Get Them Through The Winter

5. (U) The strategic objective of the current relief phase is to get the population of the affected area through the winter, until the end of March. The key needs include shelter, blankets, food and medical supplies.

6. (U) Shelter: We estimate that 400,000 households will require some form of shelter assistance and at least 10,000

large tents will be needed to house clinics, schoolrooms, offices and the like. The GOP maintains that a combination of donor contributions, existing supplies and intensive domestic production will generate 500,000 tents by the end of November. Assuming the GOP is correct and that the domestically manufactured tents are adequate, the unmet need will be for the larger tents, plus plastic sheeting to upgrade family tents as necessary. However, we also expect that at least 60 percent of families will choose to stay at or near their existing (destroyed) homes, so the tents will need to be augmented by selected building materials to enable families to self-engineer a "warm dry room" during the winter. These materials include plastic sheeting, corrugated metal roofs and stoves, fuel and household goods.

17. (U) Blankets: The GOP hopes to provide two blankets per person for an affected population numbering an estimated 3.3 million (i.e., 6.6 million blankets). Some 3.8 million blankets have been provided to date, leaving a gap of 2.8 million.

18. (U) Food: While there is not an immediate acute need for food, orders must be placed soon in order to ensure adequate supplies for the winter, particularly if a large population of refugees moves into the camps being established by the GOP. The World Food Program estimates the food need at 720,000 metric tons, enough to feed 2.8 million people for 6 months. As a net food importer, Pakistan will not be able to meet this incremental food need via domestic production; much of it will have to be shipped in.

19. (U) Other Supplies: Roughly 65 percent of the health infrastructure in the affected area has been destroyed. Over the longer term, this infrastructure will have to be reconstructed, but there is an immediate need to replenish stocks of antibiotics and other drugs. We will be ordering up to ten health kits (that can serve up to 10,000 people each for three months). Other needed supplies include family hygiene kits, tool kits and cooking kits.

An Evolving Relief Effort -----

10. (U) The initial emergency phase of this humanitarian relief effort has required rapid delivery of supplies and, in many cases, direct execution of relief operations by U.S. and Pakistani military elements. This emergency phase will last for at least another two weeks as we prepare for the onset of winter. During this period, U.S. military airlift capacity will be urgently required for delivery to Pakistan of shelter materials, blankets, food and other supplies identified in paras 5-9. Over time, however, there will be a natural transition toward more cost effective and efficient sea-lift transport and delivery mechanisms as partner NGOs develop local sources for these goods. Despite daily improvement in some road networks, medium helicopter lift will remain essential through the winter to deliver supplies from depots in Islamabad and elsewhere to remote areas in the north isolated by massive land-slides.

Comment -----

11. (C) The quantity and timeliness of U.S. assistance is beginning to pay measurable dividends in terms of local perceptions of the United States in general and the U.S. military in particular. English and Urdu press regularly carry pictures of U.S. helicopters and relief supplies as well as articles that credit the U.S. for its response. In our judgment, U.S. actions have already had a measurable impact on perceptions among Pakistani Kashmiris and within the Pakistani military (most of whom have never had sustained contact with the U.S. military). In view of what we have already invested, and the positive impact it has had, we will need to be careful as we approach the transition toward a more sustainable USG relief effort. It is essential that Pakistanis not see this transition as a lessening of U.S. commitment and we should seek to preserve the positive visibility our military has received.

12. (C) U.S. military assets -- including helicopter lift and medical units -- will continue to be needed in some amount through the winter for essential humanitarian reasons. We should also begin to consider whether there are aspects of the reconstruction phase the U.S. military could usefully participate in. The positive and benign aspect of the US military on display in Pakistan and throughout the region may offer a strategic opportunity for continued humanitarian activity as a major premise of military engagement over the next two years.

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